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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 OTTAWA 002294

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SUBJECT: CANADA TAKES STEPS TO ESTABLISH SOVEREIGNTY OVER
CONTINENTAL SHELF

REF: OTTAWA 1904 (NOTAL)

11. (U) Summary: The GOC is taking steps to secure sovereign rights over seabed resources that extend to the edge of the continental shelf. On July 20 the GOC announced a C\$2 million effort to identify and map the outer edge of the continental shelf. Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Canada has 10 years from ratification to claim sovereignty over seabed resources to the limits of the continental shelf beyond the exclusive economic zone of 200 nautical miles; Canada ratified the UNCLOS in 2003. Separately, Canada has a joint initiative with the Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland to conduct surveys in northern boundary waters. Canada,s effort to secure sovereign rights may have ramifications with respect to American and Canadian maritime boundary disputes and exploitation of seabed resources, particularly in the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans. End Summary.

12. (U) Loyola Hearn, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, announced on July 20 that Fugro Jacques GeoSurveys Inc. of Newfoundland and Labrador has been awarded a C\$2 million contract to identify the outer edge of the continental shelf, which refers to the natural prolongation of the continent until the sea bottom descends to the deep oceanic floor. Minister Hearn said that the mapping &will enable Canada to establish with certainty where our continental shelf begins and ends((and this) will give Canada undisputed international recognition for our sovereign rights over the seabed resources in the areas beyond (Canada,s) 200-mile limit.8

13. (U) Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), all Coastal States are automatically granted a Territorial Sea and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) out to 200 nautical miles. Under Article 77 of the UNCLOS, approximately 50 states, including Canada, may also extend their authority further. Provided they can successfully map and state claim to an extended continental shelf, Article 77 grants &... sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring it and exploiting its (i.e., the continental shelf) natural resources8, a right, however, that does not include the waters and resources above the seafloor. Those Coastal States with a continental shelf that extends beyond 200 nautical miles have 10 years from their ratification of UNCLOS to determine its outer edge. Canada ratified UNCLOS in November 2003 and so has until November 2013 to make its claim.

14. (U) According to Minister of Natural Resources Gary Lunn, Canada already enjoys sovereign rights over its extended continental shelf in the Atlantic and Arctic oceans*an area approximately 1,750,000 kilometers. In order, however, &to provide certainty to future economic development of seabed

resources, it is important to gain international recognition to their full extent,⁸ he said. Peter MacKay, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, added that Canada is working hard to obtain the best scientific evidence to support (its) claim to the largest area of continental shelf.⁸

¶5. (U) Under the recently announced contract, Canada is set to survey approximately 17,000 square kilometers of seabed off Newfoundland and Labrador. Specifically, Fugro Jacques GeoSurveys Inc. will collect multi-beam (multiple sonar beams) survey data between July and September 2006. Qbeams) survey data between July and September 2006. Strategic hydrographic profiles will be surveyed from southern Labrador to the Laurentian Channel, including the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks, the Flemish Cap, and the Orphan Knoll. Canada will also conduct northern survey work in August 2006, using the icebreaker Louis S. St. Laurent. The UNCLOS-mapping is a joint federal government initiative led by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, with Natural Resources Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

¶6. (U) Natural Resources Canada also has a joint initiative with the Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland to conduct surveys in northern boundary waters. As part of this agreement, a joint Canada-Denmark seismic project was carried out in the spring of 2006 from Canadian Forces Station Alert, located on Ellesmere Island in the Canadian Arctic. The goal was to determine if the Lomonosov Ridge meets UNCLOS requirements for an extension of the North American continental shelf. Ironically, in 2005, Canada and Denmark engaged in a spirited debate over the nationality of Hans Island, an uninhabited barren knoll measuring a half square-mile located between Greenland and Ellesmere Island.

¶7. (U) Comment: The United States and Canada have competing

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maritime boundary claims in places along the Pacific (Dixon Entrance), Atlantic (Machias Seal Island) and Arctic Ocean (Beaufort Sea) coasts. The Canadian effort to claim sovereignty over the continental shelf may complicate these on-going disputes. End comment.

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